

FRANCE

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TRANSPORTATION - FRANCE

THE SUPREME TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

NOTE: The following information was not available during the preparation of this study.

1. The most important development in French transportation since the war is the establishment by the National Assembly in August 1947 of a Supreme Transportation Advisory Board. The Board will advise the Minister of Public Works and Transport on all transportation matters submitted to it, but may also formulate recommendations on its own initiative. The Advisory Board's immediate mission is to present, within one year, plans for the coordination of rail, highway, inland waterway, air and ocean transportation. It will include in its plans coordination of domestic transport with colonial and international transportation. The Board will study all social, technical, financial and economic matters relative to the organization and functioning of the various modes of transportation; it will also study matters concerning stock and equipment, technical and commercial development and the social, economic and administrative problems arising therefrom.

2. The Supreme Transportation Advisory Board is established under the Minister of Public Works and Transport and consists of 69 members, including representatives from various government agencies, members of Parliament, specialists from the large transport organizations, employee representatives from the operating companies and public organizations such as tourist travel agencies. Seven permanent commissions are established under the Board, charged with examining questions of transport coordination. These are as follows:

Rail	-	highway
Rail	-	inland waterway
Rail	-	air
Rail	-	sea
Highway	-	air
Highway	-	inland waterway
Sea	-	air

3. The Supreme Transportation Advisory Board is financed through a special fund provided by the Minister of Public Works and Transport. The sum expended shall be reimbursed to the state by the various transportation operators under conditions to be set forth by decree of the Minister of Public Works and Transport and the Minister of Finance.

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FRANCE - INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORTATION

A. POLICIES

1. The immediate concern of the French Government with respect to inland water transport is to restore war-damaged waterways and equipment as rapidly as possible in order to re-establish this important channel of domestic and international trade. The government is therefore rebuilding and improving existing waterways by deepening canals to permit passage of barges of greater capacity; improving facilities on the Seine and Saone rivers; and extending canal-works in the north.

The long-range policy of France is to encourage domestic inland water carriers and promote international use of inland water facilities. A French fleet on the Rhine, for example, has been of prime importance to the French economy with respect to the transport of coal, cereals, petroleum products and other bulk materials.

Political considerations have dominated French policy toward international questions affecting inland waterways. For example, France participated as a non-riparian state in pre-war negotiations concerning Danube traffic. In view of Communist strength at home, however, the French Government is now unwilling to antagonize the USSR and the French Communists by voicing its desire for a resumption of the former status of the Danube.

With respect to the Rhine, the French attitude reflects fear of a revived Germany. France is determined to maintain its leadership in the Central Rhine Commission, not so much because Rhine traffic is important to the French economy, but because France is afraid that relaxed vigilance might later invite a bid on the part of Germany to vitiate international control and substitute German domination of this important artery.

2. Policies for inland waterways are determined by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport through the Department of Navigable Waterways (DIRECTION des VOIES NAVIGABLES). This department is administered independently from those dealing with other forms of transport. The Ministry, however, coordinates policy for all transport.
3. Strategic and military considerations have not greatly influenced state policy in respect to the inland waterway system and the operation of its facilities (i.e., docks, equipment, vehicles, etc.). The relative importance of inland waterways to other forms of inland transportation is indicated by a pre-war estimate that of all French freight tonnage, about 10 per cent was carried by water, 10 per cent by road and about 80 per cent by rail.

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4. Inland waterways receive considerable aid from the state through improvements in facilities and the assignment of new equipment to operators who may reimburse the government when financially able to do so. The Ministry has entered into a six-year, state-financed cooperative plan with the waterway operators, designed to restore and renew the river fleet, much of which is notably obsolete. State aid is also inherent in the policy of permitting the water carriers to charge special rates for transport of equipment and materials of strategic value to the state economy.
5. Government policy toward inland waterways is principally influenced by economic considerations; the importance of moving certain goods, such as coal; and the financial interest of the state in the waterways, which according to the latest available estimates (1944) approximated \$600,000,000.

B. ORGANIZATION

1. All questions dealing with waterways in France are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport through the Department of Navigable Waterways, and through the Department of Maritime Ports which is responsible for certain construction and maintenance problems in port areas. In addition to the two Departments, there is an autonomous establishment known as the Office National de la Navigation, which has considerable authority concerning inland navigation.
2. The Department of Navigable Waterways is concerned with new construction, maintenance and technical problems. The Office National de la Navigation has jurisdiction over the equipment of river ports and traction facilities on the banks. The Office is also charged with commercial exploitation of the waterways and the problems of labor relations between bargemen and owners.
3. All transport agencies are subject to coordination by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport. The agencies dealing with inland waterways and the agencies concerned with merchant shipping, such as the Department of Maritime Ports, have certain common problems, otherwise their functions do not overlap. No inter-agency conflict is apparent.
4. Inland water transport agencies were originally established by the law of 5 August 1879, dividing the waterways into principal and secondary systems. The transport crisis of the twenties and the nationalization of the rail system had little effect upon the administration of French inland waterways.

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FRANCE - INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORTATION (B-5)

5. The French inland waterways system was badly disorganized by war damage and is just now in the process of rehabilitation. Steps now being taken by the government in this connection appear to meet with public approval.

C. ADMINISTRATION

1. The Ministry of Public Works and Transport authorizes the opening of new waterway routes. There must be evidence of: public need; strategic necessity (in this respect, the views of defense establishments are authoritative); or advantage to the overall transport coordination program of the Ministry.
2. In 1936, a law was passed providing that freight rates be fixed under joint action by a delegate of the Office National de la Navigation and delegates of the carriers, shippers and consignees. Freight rates since the war have been established by decrees of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and the Ministry of the National economy. Such rates are subject to strict control by the state and are subject to considerable opposition from the carriers, who desire more flexibility than is now permitted.
3. Inland water transport is favored by the state over highway transport, but not to the extent of providing competition to the state-owned railways. French policy is to control transport competition from the standpoint of state interests, regardless of the position of the private operators. Any operation, however, that is aimed at coordination of existing services is given every aid not contrary to the requirements stated above.
5. Government subsidized training schools are available for training in engineering and navigation.
6. France has for many years participated in international waterways agreements concerning traffic, rates, facilities and related matters. At the present time, the state is engaged in negotiations of a general nature with a view to restoring normal operations on the European international waterways as quickly as possible. As a riparian state, France for over 100 years has maintained an active interest in European river traffic conventions and the international conventions dealing with canal systems. (See A-1 for discussion of French policy regarding the Rhine and Danube.)